

Janet Henney, M.D.
Commissioner, FDA
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April 13, 2000

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Dear Dr. Henney:

One evening about a year ago, I experienced an unusual feeling of nausea and abdominal cramps. Being a "boringly healthy" person according to my doctor, I lay down for awhile to wait it out. It felt like I ate something that disagreed with me, but something was distinctly different. The symptoms were sudden, and increased dramatically at an alarming rate. My symptoms got much worse, and I went to a drug store to try to find something to relieve the symptoms. By the time I got there, I had to sit down in a chair and was doubled over in pain. I vomited (dry-heaved repeatedly to be exact) in a public drinking fountain in the store. Have you ever done something like that? It was quite distressing and embarrassing. I nearly called an ambulance, it was that bad. I made it home, and the cramps and nausea went away hours later. I was a basket case at work the next day - exhausted, weak, and afraid to eat.

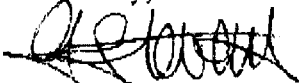
Many years ago, I unfortunately experienced a case of food poisoning requiring hospitalization. I recall the symptoms clearly. This recent experience was different. Sudden onset. Severe abdominal cramps. Symptoms linked to stomach only. No fever. Gone the next afternoon as if nothing happened.

I remained puzzled about what had happened to me until my next grocery shopping trip, where I saw a display for new fat free Pringles. I remembered purchasing a can of those things to try, and had eaten them the evening I became ill. I found the grocery receipt and verified my suspicions. I am certain my body was reacting violently in an attempt to purge itself of intolerable ingested material which I won't call food. Also, I believe only by sheer luck did I discover what caused my illness. If I had not seen the same display of Pringles, I might never have remembered I bought and ate them. If I had not picked up a package and looked at it, I would never have seen the Olestra symbol. It's so small as it is, I barely noticed it. Thank God I did, so I can avoid this toxin the rest of my life.

Am I certain my symptoms were caused by Olestra? Yes. Can I scientifically prove it? I believe so, however I am distinctly unwilling to eat that material due to the violent and severe reaction I experienced after eating it. I tell everyone I know to avoid food with the Olean/Olestra symbols on the labeling, and even tell people in grocery stores about my experience and opposition to this material in what consumers believe is packaged food.

You are doing people who eat food a real disservice by considering removing or reducing the Olestra label. I expect the Food and Drug Administration to act in the best interests of the public by objectively evaluating the information made available to you, including our real life experiences. If you have received tens of thousands of complaints regarding Olestra, your best course of action would be to increase warning labels so that other human beings have a chance of avoiding the experience I have described to you.

Sincerely,



G. Stevens
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